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Refocus The Fuzzy
Matthew 6: 25-33

VIDEO Begins

"I'll spend less time with God.
I will hide my faith from my coworkers.
This year I will spend more and tithe less.
I will read the Bible as little as possible.
I will remain silent when I know I should speak.
This year...
This year...
This year... I will not share my faith with my best friend.
I will shirk leadership responsibilities every chance I get.
I will continue to justify my bad behavior.
And, give God my leftovers.
This year...
This year...
This year...I will let the busyness of life squeeze God out."
VIDEO Ends

What will you do this year? How many of you have made resolutions already? Anyone? Want to admit to it? A few of you. It says, basically, those who are brave enough to make resolutions—I congratulate you if you have made resolutions—that 40 percent of those folks by February 1, will have already broken that resolution. I don't mean to burst your bubble, but, there you go. I want to really cause you to resolve more so to keep your resolution. What will you do this year? What will you do this year when it comes to God?

Resolutions very often come down to, "Well, what about me? How am I seeing this life? How does it circle around me?" Really, if you understand spirituality as Christ wants us to, really, it's all about God and not about us. You can at least give mental assent to that. Then again, actions do speak louder than words.

These folks, as silly as that sounds, "This year I'm going to give less time to God;" "This year I'm going to give God my leftovers." Really, actions speak louder than words. We can resolve to do certain things, but it's really your actions that are most telling about what you will do for God this year. It is all about God and not about you.

This past year, this is behind us, you have a new year to go for it now. The past year, probably your spirituality got a little fuzzy. Did it? You want to do good things for God. That's inside of you. The Holy Spirit is urging you to do that. The Holy Spirit is equipping and empowering you to do that. You want to do that. All of a sudden things just get a little fuzzy. It's like the one person said, "This year I resolve to spend more on myself and less on God." Think about that.

As you begin to see that, we make these great resolutions. We think that we have this singular focus. What happens to our focus is it gets a little fuzzy on the edges, doesn't it? Not just the spirituality, but in every aspect of our lives. Life happens. Life gets a little fuzzy sometimes.

This first message for the first year is basically to talk about *how to refine or refocus that commitment that you have on God*. It comes from the Sermon on the Mount, which is chapters 5 through 7 in the book of Matthew. We're going to look at Matthew, chapter 6. You are well familiar with verse 33 there.

It says, "*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*" What things? The things He is talking about leading up to that, of course. Some of those things we're going to talk about today. These things really are essential for how you are going to refocus and refine what you are going to do for God.

Make resolutions. Resolutions are okay to make. Don't be afraid of them. If you will make them, what you are saying is, it's really a faith statement or a faith commitment. "Lord, I want to do this for You. You've put this in my heart." Now, don't create something out of your own imagination. Really go before God and say, "God, what is it that You are going to do through me this year? What are the challenges? How are You going to stretch my faith? How am I going to be willing to step out for You?"

That's what Christ was encountering when He met the folks when He came on this earth. We've been singing still about Christ coming on this earth. "*He grew in wisdom and stature with God and man.*" (Luke 2:52) As a holy man, He walked among people.

The people who were most attracted to Jesus were who? It wasn't the *up and in*, was it? It was the *down and out*. It was those people, really, whose life had lost all focus. Those people were saying, "What is the point? I just exist." They had their religion and they held onto their religion. They were always looking for Messiah because Messiah is come to deliver.

What Christ is doing on this mountain side, the greatest sermon that was ever preached, He said to them, "*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things...*" (All these concerns that you are worried about. We do have worries in this room this morning. You have a few concerns. You have those) "*...all these things will be given to you as well.*"

You see, what God does, He comes and meets us where we are, doesn't He? He meets you exactly where you are. He knows your concerns. He knows your anxieties. He comes and speaks to you at those points. It's at those points that you recognize that you need help.

"*But seek first his kingdom...*" of God. We're going to refine and refocus just a few things this morning about what we are doing. It is my prayer, it has been my prayer, that we together will understand this and that we will move forward together individually and corporately, as God is leading us.

What is that first thing? Instead of just saying, "We've got a fuzzy focus and we've tried to turn those fuzzies into warm fuzzies that don't last, like our resolutions. What are these things that we really can say, "Okay, I'm going to refine this." The first one is this and you might understand it.

It is to release your insecurities. We all have insecurities. Some of you are a little insecure about how attractive you are. Some of you are like me. You've gotten old enough where you really just don't care anymore. I can tell by looking at you. Did I say that? Wow, that wasn't supposed to come out.

As you begin to look at that, you have these insecurities. Some of you are insecure about how tall you are; how short you are; how whatever. We always can find something we are insecure about. If you are going to refine your focus with God this year, you've got to begin where your weakness is, your insecurities.

I don't know what your insecurity is, but you do. I do know what the insecurities to those folks were because what Christ does, He begins to speak, He makes these broad questions or offers three questions that makes these broad applications. The first is this. He says, notice, He says, *"²⁵Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"* (NIV)

We've got to go back and try to understand this first century mentality in the Middle East. As I said, the *up and in* didn't really receive Christ that well; it was the *down and out*. Why? There's no middle class. Most of us in this room are middle class. There *was* no middle class. That's where you've got to understand the Scripture and understand that who He is speaking to are the *down and out*. They really *do* worry about what they are going to eat. They really *do* worry about what they are going to wear.

You've got more than one pair of shoes. Can I just say that? Most of us in the room. You've got more than one change of clothes. Most of you. I've just moved and I do give praise to God. I finally got moved in this week. I give the Lord praise for that. I'm all here, whether you like it or not. I'm here, baby. You've got to run me off, now.

You may not believe this, but I've got a whole closet full of suits. You say, "Why don't you ever wear them?" I've got more than one suit! I've got a lot of clothes. I've got a lot of shoes. I've got a lot of boots. I've got a lot of this. I've got a lot of stuff. How about you? That's not these folks.

These folks really *do* worry about what they are going to eat. Where their next meal is going to come from. They really *do* worry about if they are going to have shoes for their kids; if they are really going to have clothes on their backs. They really *do* worry about those type things. Just put yourself there. Then we're going to expand this and understand that God's Word is always applicable to wherever we may be. Here's the question. He says, *"Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"*

We might say it this way. "Do the clothes make the man or does the man make the clothes?" Which is it? It's the man that makes the clothes. It's not the clothes that make the man. You see, what Jesus was doing, He says, "You worry about all of these things." He says, "There's really the *one* thing that you need to worry about. That is your *life*. Not just the physically body, but the *spiritual* body; the *spiritual* life that you have." So, Christ asks the question. You need to focus. We will refine that focus to say, as we look at it, "Why am I here?"

Do you know why you are here? Have you ever ponder that? Why are you here? Don't say, "My parents decided they wanted to have *x* number of kids and so here I am." There's more to it than that. As I have said before, you were chosen in the heart of God. Your birth is no accident. It's not.

If your birth is no accident and God is omniscient, He knew you were going to be born. Then, why are you here? Have you ever pondered that? Maybe you don't want to ponder that question because that question could be painful. You say, "Okay. I've fallen short of where I am to be." Why are you here?

Let me tell you what Scripture says. Scripture says this, "You are here for the pleasure of God." Revelation 4:11 says, "*You created everything and it's for Your pleasure that they exist and were created.*"

Your #1 reason for being here is not to build your portfolio; it's not to have numerous kids; it's not to have great events like a New Year's eve party or things like that. That is not why you are here. Let me just tell you this morning, "What Christ is telling you is, 'The reason you are here is to bring pleasure to God.'" That's why.

When we begin to refine our focus for the New Year, you must ask yourself, "Why am I here?" If I do understand biblically that I am here for the pleasure of God, then I begin to filter everything that comes into my New Year life to say, "Is it bringing pleasure to God? Is this pleasing to God, or is it pleasing to me?" Very often, it's just about pleasing me. How about you? That's the way I look at things, but that's not the way God looks at things.

You've got some great plans already. Some of you have already initiated your plans for the New Year. You need to ask yourself, "Is this pleasing to God?" It will so radicalize your life that some of you will say, "I need to scrap some plans." Will you do that by faith? Can you do that by faith?

That's what faith is about. It's believing that God has the best for you and that you don't want anything less than God's best. Does that describe you in 2012? That's a great question, isn't it? Why am I here? Everyone is asking that question.

There's another question we find here in this text this morning in Matthew 6. Verse 26 says this, "*Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them...*" Here's the next question, "*... Are you not much more valuable than they?*" There's a question to you. Focus on or refine, "Will I admit, or what is my value?" *What is your value?*

I've talked to enough people to know this. Some of you right now believe that you are actually worthless. You might have a lot of clothes, you might have a lot of this and a lot of stuff. You know what? You have a low self-esteem, don't you? You really do.

I looked on the Internet and if I saw it on the Internet, it's got to be true, right? This part is true. You take all your body's chemicals and just winnow them down. Do you know what your physical body is worth, the chemicals in your body? You know how much? Anybody want to take a guess? One dollar. That's it. One dollar.

It's kind of morbid, as I read on about it. The article said, "If you really want to get full price for yourself, you actually could tan out your hide and given the same about you get per cowhide, that's another \$3.50. Really you're worth \$4.50." I could say, "\$4.50 and you are still going to say to me, 'And, I don't even feel like I'm worth that much.'" You know who you are. Some of you have come out of that, thankfully.

What is your value? How much are you worth? If we only look at value intrinsically of what my chemicals will bring. One buck. Or, if you tan me out, another \$3.50. I'm only worth \$4.50? It's not the intrinsic that God looks at. Once again, you've got to get beyond yourself, as difficult as that might be. You've got to be able to look at you the way God looks at you, extrinsically.

How does God see you? Well, I could quickly illustrate that. I could take any parent and child and bring them up here and just ask the parent, "How much would you give to spare your child's life?" They would say, "Pastor, I would give you everything I have and everything you have, too." I would understand that.

When you think about what Christ did for us, that's exactly what God did. God's Son, Jesus Christ, came on this earth, Philippians, chapter 2, tell us, that He released Himself from His position in Heaven to come down on earth to take on flesh and to die on a cross for our sins. He died for you.

If He who created everything, and Christ did, if He who created everything died for you, now I ask you one more time, "How much value do you have?" Extrinsically, how much value do you have in the eyes of God? You have so much value in the eyes of God that God says, "If it were you and just you, My Son would still come and die for you. He's the creator of everything." Do you see what value you have?

Beloved, stop beating yourself up. Yes, you blew in 2011. I understand that. I blew it a few times in 2011 more than I care to admit. I did that. Just because I blow it and you blow it, does not mean God loves you any less.

Take heart in that. Be encouraged by that. Never let anyone tell you—Some of you are in some family situations that are abusive. We could say abusive not just physically, but emotionally. Telling you, "You're stupid. You're not going to amount to anything. I don't know why I married you." You know the language that goes out there. It's painful.

Regardless of what anyone tells you, your value is not intrinsic. Your value is extrinsic. God looks at you and He loves you. He says, "I love you so much, I give my Son for you." Isn't that wonderful? We go back and say, "... *Are you not much more valuable than* (the birds) *they?*" Just look at that on face value. Understand what God is saying to us. He is saying, "I love you so much. I give Myself for you." You are valuable. You need to understand that going into 2012.

Why are you here? For the pleasure of God. What's your value? Everything. Everything to God. He loved you so much that He wants to spend eternity with you. You are going to spend eternity somewhere and He wants it to be with Him. That's a good father, wouldn't you say? That's a good father, a great father. He goes on from there.

Here comes the next question to us. Look at verse 27, Matthew 6. "*Can anyone of you by worrying add a single hour to his life?*" That's a really good question. *Any of you, by worrying, add a single hour to your life?* You cannot add a moment to your life. You say, "I can do this. I can exercise and I will live a little longer." No, no, no. You misunderstand. You can't do anything that extends your life. What you can do is do some things that keep from shortening your life. Understand?

God has set a time when you will part from this world. Unless you just try to overwrite God's plan and you take your own life, the only thing you can do is shorten it. You can't lengthen that. There's nothing you can do. You can exercise all you want. All you are doing is keeping from shortening it. That's it. That's a good thing. I applaud that. I need to do more of that.

Think about this question, "*Will I admit my limitations?*" Will you admit your limitations? This is where pride comes in. I can talk to you about things about why you are here. You can say, "Oh, yes. I'm here for Jesus. That's why I'm put here on this earth." I can talk about value and you get encouraged when I start talking about the extreme value you have in the eyes of God, regardless of what men say. This is

where it gets very personal. It comes down to your pride of saying, "What are my limitations? Will I admit my limitations?"

You see, it's only when I begin to see and admit my limitations that I understand that I need a Savior. It's only when I admit that, I need a Savior. There are some people who call themselves atheists and some people who call themselves agnostics and some people who just say, "There is no God." Another says, "I don't know if there can be a God or not." You can talk all about that. The problem there is not just an intellectual gap there, though I believe it's there, but it's also this faith gap of beginning to understand in my life, "I've got limitation." If you ask them if they have limitations they'll say, "Yes." Does that limitation bring you to the point of saying, "Then I need someone more powerful than me."

There are people—the bookshelves. Well, we don't handle books much anymore, do we? You go to seminars. Seminars are full about these things that I'm telling you right now. The answer is only found in Jesus. You will not commit your life to Christ until you acknowledge that you have a weakness and your main weakness is your sin. That's it.

We live in a fallen world. He says, "*Can anyone of you by worrying add a single hour to his life?*" He's not just talking about *chronos*, about "time." He's talking about your life. He's talking about, "Will you admit that you have limitations."

I was kidding earlier. I brought these out. You don't see these very often. These are reading glasses. I would not wear reading glasses until I turned fifty. Did I need them before then? Yes. Can you identify with this? What was my issue? My issue was, "I've always had 20/15 vision. Perfect vision." I've always had that. As a matter of fact, I can still see as far as you want to see and see things far off. When you start putting things right up in here, I've got problems. My problem isn't just about my vision. The bigger issue is I've got pride. I said, "I'm not going to wear these things." I can walk around and look intellectual. Do them like this and talk like that. I need all the help I can get on that side of it. I understand.

That illustrates what we're talking about life. You've got to admit that you have some limitations. If you never admit what your limitations are, that there is this thing that you cannot get outside of these bounds of your limitations. The overarching thing, of course, as Christ preaches this, is your sin and your need for God.

Will you admit your limitations? We live in a paradoxical world. We really do. You won't find any more so than what you find in Scripture, the paradox that we live in.

I want you to notice something. 2 Corinthians 12:9 says this when Paul was writing about his weaknesses. He says, each time as he approached God, God would say to him about his weakness, his *thorn in the flesh* he had, "⁹ ...*He said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me.*" (New Living Translation)

Beloved, until you admit you have weaknesses, the power of Christ cannot work through you. Do you admit that you have the weakness of sin that has caused you to be depraved and fully fallen from God? Until you admit that, you cannot know salvation that He has offered to you. Then, once you know that salvation, then we talk about sanctification.

Until you admit the other limitations that you have; until you surrender yourself completely to God in 2012, you can't grow as God wants you to grow. You can't mature as God wants you to mature. Admit it. Confess it. Paul said, "Every time I ask for help in this weakness, He said, 'My grace is sufficient.'"

I want to tell you today, "God's grace is sufficient for you confessing your pride and your weaknesses before Him. Letting Him take over as Savior and Lord and do what He wants to do through you." Are you ready to do that? Will you do that? That's the question. We've got to start with our weaknesses. We've got to start with where we are. That's what Jesus did.

Here's the second thing you have to do. We find in our text this morning, *you've got to rest in His sufficiency*. Why do you have to rest in His sufficiency? We've admitted that "I had limitations. I have weaknesses." I've got to find something more powerful outside. We know that something more powerful or all sufficient is Christ, who is God.

He says to them, ³¹*So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'* ³²*For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.*" Notice what the pagans do. What does the Scripture say the pagans are doing? Running. Very good. They're running. Do you notice people in this world running? I see it all around me. They're running here to get help. They're running there. They're on just nothing more than the treadmill of life. They are running. They think they will find answers in where they run in this direction or where they run in that direction. Then they critique each other's direction. They're always running.

The Christian life is not about running. The Christian life is about... what? Resting! That's it. Anybody need a good rest? Some of us live to rest, don't we? Some of you have your nap times planned out. We live to rest. Why? We are so weary from this world. Jesus is saying, "You don't need to let this world wear you out. I'll be your power."

He says, *"Don't be like the pagans."* What's a pagan? *"A fool says in their heart, 'There is no god.'"* A pagan does not acknowledge that there is a god. A pagan is somebody living life according to their schedule. A believer, a Christian, is allowing God's life to live through them according to God's schedule. A vast difference; it's the difference between running and resting.

Will you rest in His sufficiency? We have a couple of things here to describe the sufficiency for us. The first one is this. *Focus all on the all sufficient relationship that we have in our Heavenly Father*. He says He's a Father to us. When you begin to refine the focus that you have to take that fuzziness of 2011 and bring it into refinement and that focus that you have on God, understand He is your Father.

As always, we ought to say this. I know some of you didn't have the best earthly fathers and may not have them now, but He's your Heavenly Father. As your Heavenly Father, He loves you. As your Heavenly Father, it says in James 1:16 and 17, ¹⁶*Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters.* ¹⁷*Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.* (The New International Version)

One of the things that you find is that in parenting sometimes we're not always consistent. Would you agree? Just take it. You remember your firstborn came along? How regimented you were with the first born? Everything had to be just right. Everything was just this. The diaper bag was all decorated and everything was just right. You always made sure they didn't eat this. Everything was very regimented.

Then what happened about the time the third one came around? I was the third one in my family. Does it show? "Well, okay, it's not going to hurt them none. Dust it off. Three second rule." That type of stuff. You take your pacifier. You drop your pacifier. You used to have to... what? Boil it. The third one, stick it right back in. That's what you did. It's what you do.

In parenting, we're not consistent. Here's the wonderful thing about our Heavenly Father. He is consistent. Not just consistent in all His actions, in His loving actions toward us, but He's consistent from child to child. No child treated any differently than the other. No child loved less than the others. He's your Father. *"Every good and perfect gift comes down from our Father of Heavenly lights, where there is no shifting shadow in God."* (James 1:17)

Listen, Beloved, that's a foundation you can build on for 2012. Will you build on it? He is all sufficient in His relationship to us.

Now, here's something else that's going to help refine or focus you. *You need to understand that you also have an all sufficient destination.* Not just a relation, but a destination. That destination is Heaven. Verse 32, *"³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them."* In John 14, verses 2 and 3, says, *"My father's house has many rooms. If it were not so I would have told you. If I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there you may be also."*

What is Jesus telling His apostles in John 14? He's saying this, "In My Father's house, your Heavenly Father, there's a lot of rooms. He's got a room for all who will come. He's a consistent Father. He's a good Father. Someday you have a destination called Heaven, if you know Him."

Here's the problem. There is a detachment between what *is* and what *shall be*, too often in my life. That is, I don't live with Heaven in mind. Do you? I'm not talking about, "Okay, I'm ready to cross over and all that." I'm not talking about all that. I understand that, too. What I'm talking about is, there is something about being a citizen of Heaven that ought to be seen in us here on earth, isn't it?

What is citizenship in Heaven like? It's not a bunch of rules. It's about grace. Now, there are things that God says. "To love as we have been loved." "To forgive as we have been forgiven." There are these things that we understand that God has given to us as citizens of Heaven. We need to live as citizens of Heaven. We have an ultimate destination. It's a sufficient destination. There's room for everyone.

What we don't need to do in 2012 is to detach ourselves from the reality that is all around us. What is that reality? I'm a child of God, and so are you. We treat each other like Kingdom citizens. I love King James sometimes when it talks there about God's people. It says, *"We are a peculiar people."* (1 Peter 2:9) That just means "distinct." It doesn't mean you are "odd for God." Some are. Distinct, we're *distinct people*. We've been "set aside." That's what *holiness* means. You've been "set aside." If you are a child of God you have been set aside. For what reason? To just hang out until God shows up? No! We're not here just to hang out until Heaven comes. We're here to live Heaven on earth. *"Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done ... where? On earth, as it is in Heaven."* (Matthew 6:10) Makes all the difference.

I realize that I have given you a lot here. There's a lot here. I could do, I don't even know how long, there's a bunch of sermons in that. This is a broad stroke. It's for the Holy Spirit to come in and to color within the lines of your life.

Will you release your insecurities to God in 2012? Will you? You know what they are. He knows what they are. You have to release to Him to know you're insecure, to know you need a Savior. That's why He came. Release those insecurities. Understand that God loves you so much that He gave His Son for you.

Begin this year living for God. Take away the fuzzy in your life. As I said earlier, when you start a New Year's resolution, 40 percent basically will breach that February 1. As you make a commitment this morning for 2012, I understand we are all "frail creatures of dust," aren't we? We are. There are going to be times that you are going to breach that and you are not going to live as a Kingdom citizen. You're going to blow it. Guess what? Come back to these realities.

Why am I here?
What value do I have?
What are my limitations?

Is there a sufficient God, a Father who is consistently loving me and calling me and working in me His Kingdom purpose? There is. We choose. What will you choose today?

Let's pray.

"Father, we thank You that You have been so good to us and always are. We thank You for this Word this morning that You have delivered to us by helping us to refocus and refine what was fuzzy from last year, God.

Lord, today we might need just to confess some things that we know already are hindering 2012.

Lord, we pray that You would give us the ability that we would surrender ourselves to the strength of Your Spirit; to confess our pride; to confess our selfishness.

Lord, today, as Your congregation, we just commit ourselves to You. Lord, may we be one as You are One with the Father. In that oneness understand that You are speaking and moving. Lord, that You would help refine the focus of what You are doing among as a people.

Yet, Lord, we know that the sum is greater than the parts, but every part is important.

Lord, may Your Kingdom come, Your will be done in our hearts this morning.

If there is confession to be made, God, agreeing with You about what is wrong, Lord, may we do that this morning. Lord, may that be in our hearts.

Lord, if it's a case of where we just need to commit some things You've called us to already, beyond very specifically, Lord, help us to be willing to say, 'Yes.'

Jesus, in this moment we give it to You for Your glory. It is all about You and not about us. Forgive us when we forget that.

We thank You, God, that You have reminded us this morning how great and powerful and loving that You are. How You have been mindful of us.

It's in Your holy name I pray, Amen."

In this altar call, this is the first worship service of 2012. What a wonderful time, whether you decide to come and pray at these steps or altar and just say, "Lord, I'm giving myself to You." Maybe just take the hand of your spouse and say, "Honey, we need to commit to do some things. Let's go pray." However God leads you.

We need to take seriously we're not just going through the motions. We understand that God has given us this day and every day is a gift from God that we use for Him.

Now we have opportunity to say, "Lord, here I am. Use me. Send me. 2012 is Yours. Work through me, this is my prayer."

Brother Shane is going to lead us in *Refiner's Fire*. That's just part of what God is doing. Whether you come forward or not, be right with God. Happy New Year! God loves you. Let's stand together.